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CRITICAL NOTICES.

Die hebräischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher (Hebrew Translations and the Jews as Interpreters). Von MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER. Berlin, 1893. Two Volumes.

THE author, with whose name all my readers are familiar, does not need any introduction. Criticism is out of the question for a work which is based on documents and not on speculation, and, moreover, has been gradually elaborated during half a century by one who ranks highest in Jewish literature and bibliography. I shall, therefore, put before my readers the various subjects which are treated in the present book of over a thousand pages and enumerate the material used for it. Jewish translation from the Hebrew into Greek begins in the second century B.C. with the Septuagint; next comes the *Targum* into Aramaic and later into Persian for the Bible; last into Arabic and other languages which the Jews were obliged to learn after their dispersion. It is chiefly with translations from the Latin and Arabic that Dr. Steinschneider's book deals, in a less degree from Spanish, a minimum from French and German, and none from a Slavonic language. The statistics of the translations, in round numbers, as far as they are known at present, are as follows, according to our author:—Thirty Greek authors (mostly from the Arabic), seventy Arabic authors (besides fifteen anonymous writings), fifty Jews, including ten Karaites, one hundred Christians (besides fifteen anonymous), and single pieces (of which it is difficult to give the number). The number of works, not exactly counted yet, must amount to hundreds, and the number of MSS. still preserved, in libraries, public and private, comprising duplicate copies of several works, would reach a thousand. If it is, therefore, says Dr. Steinschneider, a little exaggeration on the part of a modern writer who states that MSS. of Hebrew translations of later works, written by Mediæval Christian authors are to be found in libraries in hundreds, still it is surprising that more Christian writings were translated into Hebrew than those composed in Arabic, including the Greek sources translated into Arabic. This proves that for the intellect there is no ghetto. And what are the subjects which were translated and have been found in these still-

preserved thousand MSS.? Nothing less than all that occupies the human mind, viz., Philosophy in all its branches, mathematics with all its sub-divisions, medicine, and divers subjects, such as fables, legendary stories, magic, chiromancy, geomancy, lapidaria, astrology, and other subjects, for which Dr. Steinschneider finds no classification. And where are the thousand MSS. which are used in our author's book? They are dispersed in all corners of Europe, mostly stored up in greater and smaller public libraries, and a few in private possession. The enumeration of these MSS., the reader will find in No. VIII. (p. 1070) of our author's work. Some of the great collections are described in catalogues made according to modern methods; for a few others only old catalogues are extant, and some others have no catalogue at all. One can imagine the difficulties Dr. Steinschneider had to face in order to be as complete as possible. Happily some friends who visit libraries of various countries from time to time, as well as owners of private collections, willingly assisted our painstaking and deserving author; and since, as I have said, Dr. Steinschneider's great work was planned fifty years ago, and there has been time to procure information, we can see the great work before us in a very complete form.

There were two ways open for our author with regard to the method of expounding the subject he had in view, viz., (1) by giving the translations according to the alphabetical order of the names of the translators, followed by the anonymous translations, and by summarising the subject in an alphabetical index. This plan would be more convenient for those who look for biographies of authors, for literary history or for encyclopaedic work. (2) The arrangement according to subjects with an alphabetical index of authors. This last method our author was obliged to employ, since he did not limit himself to the Hebrew translations, but also gives minutely a description of the originals from which the translations were made, biographically and bibliographically, adding in every instance the Hebrew commentaries, supercommentaries and glosses, with all details possible, and all these could only be made handy by the division into subjects. I will now make this more clear by an example. Let us take the article on Euclid. The description of the Arabic text, with the subdivision into fifteen books, is absolutely necessary for the understanding of the two translations, viz., by Moses ibn Thabbon (Thibbon) and Jacob ben Machir; next come glosses and commentaries in Hebrew based upon one of these translations. If the first method had been employed by our author, those various matters could not have been placed together, and the difficulty of gathering them together from an index would be immense. The division of

Dr. Steinschneider's great work is, as I have already mentioned, the following :—Our author begins with a general chapter on encyclopædic treatises, and those of the methods of study. Concerning the date of Gerson ben Solomon, I do not agree with my friend. For those who are interested in the matter I refer to the forthcoming thirty-first volume of the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, p. 394 ; next comes I. Philosophy, subdivided into seven parts ; II. Mathematics ; III. Medicine ; IV. Divers matters. Each of these four chapters, has the following subdivisions : the works of the Greeks, of the Arabs, the Jews, and of the Christians, works which were successively translated. Of most of the translations, which are still in MS. (only a part of Averroes' commentaries on the Organon and the Canon of Avicenna are printed), Dr. Steinschneider gives the *incipit* and the *explicit*, with other characteristics of the translations. This description will be of great assistance for identifying MSS. of the kind as to the names of their translators. In the notes we find, besides references to previous descriptions, useful observations, more especially very often concerning Latin MSS. For Hebrew literature in general I draw attention to the chapter on philosophy concerning the Jews. It was too late to notice in the supplementary notes Bahya's (or Behai's, p. 327,) Arabic treatise on the soul מעאני אלנפש, a MS. in the Paris library lately acquired (See *Revue des Etudes Juives*, t. xxv., p. 248). David אלתקמץ (p. 378) is quoted by Yedaiah Penini, which may also be an argument that David was not a Karaite (see *Hist. Litt.*, etc., t. xxxi., p. 380, n. 1, and additions, p. 794). Simson Munay (p. 383) is probably Simson of Joigny (*Ibidem*, p. 356). I regret that I still differ from my friend concerning the identity of Joseph ibn Aqnin with Joseph ben Judah, Maimonides' disciple. To decide this question we shall have to wait for the description of Joseph ibn Aqnin's commentary on the Tracta Aboth, or, better, its edition from the MS. in the possession of Professor D. Kaufmann.

Not less useful for Jewish literature is the last chapter, which contains divers subjects. Here I may point out the discussion concerning the book *בן המלך והגניז*, translated from the Arabic by Abraham ibn Hasdai, also on *Kalila v'dimana*, on *Sindebad*, and the legend concerning Alexander the Great. The last is important also for the history of the Josippon. The list of the Responsa of the Gaonim, which were translated from the Arabic, as well as the following articles on Haya, Judah ibn Balam, Hayyuj, ibn Jannah and Maimonides will be read with great profit. The same will be the case with the chapter on the Karaites. In the part which treats of Christian writings I may point out the sections on Prester John, and on Marie de France (Berechia Naqdan). It is difficult

to make out why our author does not agree with Mr. Joseph Jacobs concerning Berechiah's date and his probable temporary stay in England, since the word בְּאֵת הַיּוֹם is found in most of the MSS. which have the introductory poem. The פִּזְרָה is dedicated to the Mecenas Meshullam, who died about 1180. I confess that all data concerning Berechia are yet obscure, but that the author of the *Fox Fables* visited England is beyond doubt; in this he followed the example of Abram ibn Ezra.

The last part of Dr. Steinschneider's work treats of Jews who were the interpreters of Hebrew and Arabic works, *i.e.*, who translated orally from these languages, whilst the Christian translator put the version on paper with his own phraseology. Here we must draw attention to the articles devoted to Abraham de Balmes, Isaac ibn Sid, and Jacob Mantino. In general the Jews therefore made in many cases Greek thoughts accessible to the Christian mediæval writers through the channel of the Arabic translations, and this point has never been worked out so clearly as we find it in Dr. Steinschneider's book. This part will be useful to those who are interested in the history of culture in the middle ages. In the notes at the end of the work our author gives lengthy extracts from prefaces of Hebrew translators, which are often of historical importance for the country where they were written, as well as for the state of the Jews of the time. But Dr. Steinschneider's work becoming too voluminous with over 1,100 pages of close print, no reasonable space was left for these texts, in spite of the economy of space between the notes and the indexes, which run in straight lines like the book itself; so our author is publishing them from time to time in the *Monatsschrift*, edited by Dr. Braun and Prof. Kaufmann. On the other hand, the prefaces of translators belonging to the South of France (and they are numerous) will be found in the forthcoming volume of the *Histoire littéraire de la France*. After these *Endenoten* follow the five, Indexes, viz., 1. Hebrew titles of the works. 2. Arabic titles, according to the Hebrew alphabet, with Hebrew characters. 3. Hebrew expressions occurring in the translations. 4. Arabic expressions which occur in the originals. Thus we have in one and three a nucleus of a vocabulary of neo-Hebraic expressions, created by the various translators. No. 5 contains the index of names and matters. At the beginning the reader will find the table of abbreviations, used too frequently in German learned books. This is followed by the table of contents. Next comes the preface, followed by general remarks on the Jews as polyglots; on the motives for making translations; on the requirement and the forms of translations; on the differences from the original; on Hebraisms; on the history and statistics of the translations, and

finally on the tendency of our author's book. The translations began, Dr. Steinschneider rightly says, earlier than many think. It is most likely Halakhic Responses were written in the Babylonian schools in Aramaic, a language which the Jews in Egypt, the Maghreb, and even Spain scarcely understood. Indeed, Judah ben Qoreish (ninth century) exhorted his brethren in Mauritania not to neglect the Aramaic, in which the Targum is written. We shall see in other pages of our QUARTERLY that the Halakhoth of R. Yehudai Gaon (about 721 A.D.) written in Aramaic were soon translated into Hebrew and Arabic. The ardour for translations from Arabic sprang up in the twelfth century in Provence, where the Jews wanted to learn what Saadiah, Bahyah, and Judah hal-Levi say in their philosophico-theological books. It was the family of the Thabbon (Thibbon) at Lunel who were the champions of translators. Dr. Steinschneider mentions a translation, made at Narbonne in 1160, by the famous Abraham ibn Ezra of the Arabic work on astronomy by Al-Matani, a contemporary of Judah ibn Thabbon. Through Maimonides' *Guide*, after it had been translated by Samuel ibn Thabbon, the Jews, in countries where Arabic was not spoken, became acquainted with Arabic works on philosophy, mathematics, and medicine, and hurried to have them translated into Hebrew by Moses ibn Thabbon, by his relatives Jacob Antoli and Jacob ben Machir (Profatius Judæus).

One would have thought that after the expulsion of the Jews from Provence in 1306, the Jewish enthusiasm for translations of Arabic works of science would slacken. But the contrary was the case. Qalonymos ben Qalonymos made his numerous translations from 1307 to 1320. There was Abba Mari at Salon, Samuel of Marseilles, Leon of Carcassonne, the Avigdors and many other translators in the South of France. For commentators on Averroes we have only to mention Levi ben Gerson, and Moses of Narbonne. This ardour continued even in the first half of the fifteenth century, and all this was done in the time of calamities. How was this ardour for knowledge stimulated? The answer is, that the Jews had a love for learning at that time, which continued to the beginning of our century. "The Jew," says Dr. Steinschneider, "knew besides nobility of sentiment, only that of learning, to which he himself and his children could be lifted up. The Rabbis at this epoch are called 'Kings,' as was the case at an earlier epoch. An exalted Knight could boast that he cannot read and write, but the illiterate Jew belonged to the common people (*גְּנָזֶר מַעַן*)."¹ What a change there is in our generation, wherein Jewish learning is despised, and relegated to professional men. *O tempora, O mores!* The law of Moses is no more the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob (Deut. xxx. 4). As to the tendency of

the book, our author speaks in a gloomy tone. He says, "I have made these researches for myself ; there were always men, who consider researches as selfish activity, just as others undertake them for enjoyment. I write first of all for readers who from time to time will consult the book ; continuous readers are here out of question." Yes the author is right in that. His great work is above all a reference book for many branches of learning. For Jewish literature, for biography, for bibliography, and the last important also for a non-Jewish student. He will find it useful for Arabic studies, as well as for mediæval Latin. That our author's work is and will be valued, is evident from the fact that the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* has awarded to it one of its prizes. There is no public library which could be without this book, and no student of Jewish learning can spare it ; moreover Arabic and mediæval scholars must consult it. We hope that our friend will see his work out of print, although he is advanced in age. As to Dr. Steinschneider's taking leave of his book, and with it of life, that is another gloomy view which no student ought to take. We are all mortal, but the age of seventy-seven is not yet death. This has been proved in the case of many great statesmen, soldiers and learned men. All who are interested in Jewish researches hope that our author will be able to finish two works which he has in hand, viz., Additions to Benjacob's *Thesaurus Librorum Hebraicorum*, which will rather be a new enlarged edition with an arrangement according to the authors, and the History of the Jewish-Arabic Literature.

Let me mention that these general remarks are followed by nine pages of additions and corrections, appended as late as in May last, additions which make the work more complete. It is natural that even here the corrections are not exhausted as regards figures relating to passages quoted from previous writings and to numbers of MSS. Such mistakes are inevitable in a work of bibliography.

I take the opportunity to mention that my learned friend has just brought out the index of authors mentioned in his German essay on Jewish literature (in the *Realencyclopædie*, edited by Ersch und Gruber, Bd. 27) with a concordance for the English translation with the title of *Jewish Literature*, London, 1857, a work out of print since 1873. The dates and the countries when and where the authors lived, which are appended to the name, will prove very useful and handy.

A. NEUBAUER.